



Industry-Driven Workforce Acceleration

Testimony of Charlie Mulligan | Stiegler EdTech On House Bill 96 before the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 96.

My name is Charlie Mulligan, and I am here today on behalf of Stiegler EdTech. I respectfully request that the Senate include an appropriation of \$500,000 in each fiscal year to create a varsity e-sports STEM league for students in grades 9-12. This critical funding will provide high school students with real-world skills, industry recognized credentials, and meaningful career pathways in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, biotech, and healthcare through competitive, high-tech gaming.

STEM in Ohio by the Numbers

- **24.3%** of Ohio's workforce is in STEM fields according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ranking the Buckeye State lower than all neighboring states except for West Virginia
- Ohio ranks **44th** in computer science job growth, and **11,000** new jobs in computer science go unfilled each year
- **Only 50%** of Ohio's public K-12 schools have programming in computer science
- According to the STEM Opportunity Index, Ohio ranks lower than surrounding states in high school student interested in STEM fields post-graduation.
- Ohio hosts **4 of the top 50 cities** in the U.S. for STEM professionals according to WalletHub, creating more reason for homegrown STEM talent to stay local and bring home higher wages (salaries averaging **\$55,000**).

What is VESL?

Created two years ago with the support of the North Carolina General Assembly, Stiegler EdTech's Varsity E-Sports League (VESL) bridges the gap between education and employment through innovative, tech solutions. Stiegler EdTech partners with local businesses and industries to understand what skills they need in their workforce and incorporates those skills into curriculum for high school students with the opportunity to earn microcredentials. By using challenge-based learning through e-sports gaming, students' STEM aptitude increases and excitement about technology grows.

How will VESL Train Students for Ohio's In-Demand Jobs?

When properly structured, e-sports can provide the same life soft skills as traditional varsity sports including communication, teamwork, problem solving, and leadership. This can be especially significant when working with students in underserved areas who may need

innovative ways to learn and prepare for life beyond school. All of these tools would be offered to the school and the students free of charge.

Partnering with Ohio's Businesses and Industries

As the program expands and students graduate and join participating businesses, it is our intent that future funding of the program be fully supported through private investments with our industry partners.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, your support of this funding request will help to create a new generation of Ohio's engineers, scientists and innovators who are well-equipped and passionate about their work and ready to lead the future of tech.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.